

JANET'S NEW-YEAR.

by the AUTHOR OF "Miss Derwent's Diamonds,"

Janet Arbuthnot put by the little frock she had been striving so hard to finish.

"It is almost dark," she said, glancing toward the window with a little, shuddering sigh. I suppose I shall have to go, mother."

"I suppose so, dear," replied the invalid, raising herself to a sitting posture; "but they might have spared you to me tonight."

"Yes, mother; but Mrs. Draper thought they would never get on with the dresses for the tableaux without my help."

"And my new frock, Janet," piped a curly-headed little thing from the corner, "who will finish that?"

"Never fear, Alice," replied the sister, pleasantly. "I shall be at home bright and early tomorrow, and you shall have it in good time."

"But what's the use," continued the child, petulantly. "I might as well have no new frock, I've no place to go to; and we shan't have even A doughnut for New-Year—shall we, mother?"

The mother sighed, and fell back upon her pillow, pressing her thin hands to her face to hide the tears she could not keep back.

Janet stood, for a moment, with her hand on the door-knob; then she recrossed the room to her mother's bed.

"Don't fret, mother," she said, tenderly, kissing the wan and sunken cheeks. "Keep a brave heart, and the sun will shine again some day, despite all this darkness. I think," she added, adjusting her worn shawl, "that I'll come home tonight, if it isn't too late, after the party; and I'll ask Mrs. Draper for part of my monthly pay. You shall have a New-Year's yet,

Alice.”

She kissed them both, and left, closing the door softly behind her. But instead of going directly to the street, she went into her bedroom. Taking a key from her pocket, she unlocked a small, rose-wood case that stood upon the table, and drew forth a tiny, ebony casket. Her hands trembled nervously as she unclasped it, and lifted a string of emeralds it contained. Rare and brilliant gems they were, most daintily set, and looking strangely out of place in that humble, little chamber. Janet held them tenderly, pressing them caressingly to her lips, and letting them slip through her fingers like a stream of living light. There was a spray of heliotrope in the bottom of the casket, and its sweet, subtle odor filled the little chamber like the breath of incense; and with that strange power which odors alone possess, carried the heart of the sad-faced governess away back to the dewy dawn of her girlhood.

Only five years ago, and this self-same Janet had been the daughter of a wealthy and indulgent father, with every comfort and luxury at her command, and crowds of suitors at her feet. But only one of all these met with any favor from the shy, little beauty; and he was in every respect worthy of her. On the eve of a voyage to Calcutta, he had made his declaration, and been accepted; and the string of emeralds had been his betrothal-gift.

For months after his departure, Janet lived in a dream of bliss, and then the great trouble of her life came. Her father, who held a high position in the mercantile world, failed utterly, and finding himself a beggar, died of a broken heart. Then their beautiful dwelling, and everything went, and his poor wife sank into despairing helplessness; and there was no one left to breast the bitter, bitter storm but pretty, little Janet.

Bravely enough she did it, for the girl was a hero, despite her slender form and lily face. She removed her invalid mother and little sister to a city far distant from the scene of their recent troubles, procured humble lodgings, and then cast about her for employment.

With much difficulty, she obtained a situation as governess, a position for which her fine education and natural abilities rendered her eminently

qualified. Thus the years wore on, Janet hearing nothing from her lover. He was, probably, dead, she thought; or he might have heard of her father's failure, and resolved to quietly ignore her. She did not know, and she was too proud to inquire.

Now, standing there in the gathering gloom, with the rush and roar of the great city in her ears, she asked herself, "Why not sell the emeralds?" They would bring a good price, enough to make her poor mother and little Alice comfortable through many a dreary month. And yet she could hardly bring herself to part from them. They were the one link that bound her to the happy past. The shadows thickened round her, and the dreamy odor of the heliotrope wrapt her, like a trance, in memories of the long-ago. She could see the green, summer-garden, hear the plash of the fountain, and catch the twitter of the canaries from their gilded cages. His face was bending over her, his kisses burned upon her brow, his very words seemed sounding in her ear again. "A quaint affair for a betrothal-gift, darling," he said, "but they are very precious, and they were my mother's wedding jewels. I hold them dearer than anything else I possess, hence I give them to you."

Could she part from them? Sell them for a few paltry shillings? Her bosom rose and fell with great throbs of agony. She could not! She was coiling them into the case again, when her mother's hollow cough broke on her ear.

"For her sake," she murmured, her face whitening in the gloom. "Yes, God help me, for her sake I must!"

She closed the casket resolutely, and slipping it in her pocket, hurried out into the darkening streets. Only a block or two from Mrs. Draper's was a fashionable jewelry establishment, every window a blaze of light. With her heart in her mouth Janet entered, and glanced down the long line of gayly-dressed customers. It would be half an hour at least, she saw, before she could be waited on, and that would be too late. And after all, perhaps, Mrs. Draper might let her have part of her monthly pay, and she would not be forced to sell the emeralds just yet. Glad of any pretext or excuse for keeping her precious gems, she hurried from the shop; but thoughts of her mother and poor, disappointed little Alice brought the

blinding tears to her eyes. Life was very desolate. Alas! what would the New-Year bring to her? She ran along briskly, with a dreadful aching at her heart, till she, reached the stylish residence of her employer.

“Oh, Miss Arbuthnot! here you are,” cried Mrs. Draper, as Janet tapped at the door of the dressing-room. “Come in, we’re in dreadful need of help. Agnes is in despair; no one can do her hair to suit her; will you have the goodness to try?”

Janet laid aside her wraps, and approaching the superb beauty, who sat in an arm-chair opposite the mirror, magnificently attired in gold-colored silk, began the task of arranging the lustrous, raven hair.

“And now,” asked Janet, when her task was done, and every braid was perfect, “what ornaments shall you wear?”

“Emeralds, of course. Green and gold are his favorite colors, you know, mother, replied Agnes, smiling and blushing. “There is the jewel-case, Miss Arbuthnot.”

Janet opened it, and clasped the glittering gems on neck and wrists, and hung the gleaming pendants from the beauty’s ears.

“And what for your hair?” she asked.

“Who knows?” replied the beauty, discontentedly. “Flowers, I suppose. If only I had emeralds to match my necklace. Pshaw!” she continued, as Janet held a wreath of rose-buds against her jetty braids, “take them away. They spoil everything else. Nothing but emeralds will do.”

“Won’t your pearls answer?” suggested her mother.

“Pearls mixed with emeralds! You would make a fright of me, mamma. Oh, dear! I shall have to take off the dress, and wear something else.”

Janet hesitated a moment, and then drew the little casket from her pocket.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Draper," she said, timidly, flashing open the case; "but if these would suit, I should be so pleased."

"Why, Janet," cried the heiress, lifting the glittering string from the case, "are you another Cinderella? But where," she added, in surprise, "did you get these costly gems?"

"They were the gift of a dear friend," replied Janet, quietly. "I meant to sell them this evening, but my heart failed me."

"Why, I'll buy them, if they are for sale," kindly said the heiress. "Oh, mother, do look here! Was ever anything so magnificent?" she cried, excitedly, twining the gorgeous string round her raven braids. "May I wear them tonight, Janet?"

"In welcome," said Janet.

"Well, well!" continued Agnes, with a sigh of satisfaction, "there never was such a godsend; my dress is perfect now. I shall not forget your kindness, Miss Arbuthnot."

And she swept down to the parlors, the emeralds encircling her brow like an aureola of light. Janet looked after her with an odd sensation of mingled pain and pleasure, and half regretted the impulsive generosity, that had prompted her to proffer her precious emeralds, even for so short a time.

The tableaux were over, and the waltzing had begun. Mr. Willoughby, the lion of the season, who had just come from Calcutta, a millionaire, approached to seek Miss Draper for his first partner.

"You have surpassed yourself, tonight, Miss Agnes," he said, his eyes full of admiration, as they rested on her queenly face.

Agnes flushed with pleasure. The music struck up, and he turned to lead her off, but suddenly stopped, staring like one petrified.

"Great heavens!" he exclaimed, at last, "they are the same! Miss Draper,

excuse me! But I cannot be mistaken: where did you get those emeralds?"

Agnes grew scarlet to her very finger-tips, and drew back haughtily.

"A strange question, Mr. Willoughby," she said.

"I know, Miss Draper; and I beg pardon for my rudeness; but those gems were my gift to the dearest friend I ever had. You can understand my solicitude to know how they came into your possession."

"They are not mine, Mr. Willoughby," was the surprised answer; "they belong to my mother's governess."

"And her name?" he said, breathlessly

"Janet Arbuthnot."

Mr. Willoughby's travel-bronzed face grew absolutely radiant.

"One other favor, Miss Agnes," he said. "Can I see your mother's governess?"

For an instant Agnes struggled with wounded vanity and self-love, and then said, frankly, her better nature triumphing,

"I see, Mr. Willoughby, that there is a grand denouement at hand, the finale for our tableaux. Come with me."

He followed her from the parlors, and into a little ante-room, where the young governess sat. One glance at the quiet figure in its robe of brown; at the pallid, sorrow-worn face; and Eustace Willoughby rushed forward with outstretched arms.

"Janet! Janet!" he cried, "have I found you at last?"

Agnes disengaged the emeralds from her hair, and dropping them softly into Janet's lap, left the room, blinded by really genuine tears.

“It is quite as well as if I had won him myself,” she said.

“Why did you leave our dear old city?” said Eustace Willoughby, when he and Janet were alone together. “I can understand something of your reasons, of course: you shrank from old associations; but it has led to this apparent desertion on my part. I had to go up the country from Calcutta, on important business, fell sick, and was detained for months. When I returned to America, all trace of you was lost. I have been in search of you for months. But now we will never part again.”

So, after all, gladness and rejoicing came to Janet, and to the friends she loved, with the dawning of that happy New-Year.



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